



The Employee Benefit Specialists

January 22, 2002

Ms. Renata Hesse
Department of Justice, Antitrust Division
601 D Street NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Ms. Hesse,


Last Friday the drop in the Dow and NASDAQ were the largest since just after the attacks of September 11th. The catalysts were cautious forecasts from two technology stock market giants -- IBM and Microsoft.

This sector has seen a great deal of change and turmoil over the past several years on both sides of the pendulum -- sky level highs and rock bottom lows. Many peaks and valleys have stemmed from the Microsoft antitrust case. Just prior to the case, and even for some time into it, many would argue that tech stocks were inflated. It was the belief of several financial analysts that the valleys caused by the case were necessary to deliver a reality check to tech investors. All of this may in fact be true. Today, however, is a different day, a different time, and our nation's economy is facing very different challenges.

Disheartening news continues to surface in the *Wall Street Journal* during this time of economic downfall-- airline difficulty, telecommunication battles, and the technology industry's downturn. Stories like the one on Friday take the market on another sharp decline taking the Dow down 78 points and the Nasdaq down 55.

As part of the investment and insurance sector, these are issues that hit very close to home both for my clients and myself. With the obvious effects this case has had on the market, I believe it is prudent during this time of economic instability to settle this case.

Thank You,


Brian Hewitt
President
Group Benefits, Ltd.